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Office of the White House Press Secretary

FACT SHEET

Agreement Between the United States of America and the
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Prevention of
Nuclear War

Background

This agreement is an outgrowth of the Basic Principles of Relations, signed in Moscow by the President and the General Secretary on May 29, 1972; the second of those principles is particularly relevant. It states that: "The USA and the USSR attach major importance to preventing the development of situations capable of causing a dangerous exacerbation of their relations. Therefore, they will do their utmost to avoid military confrontations and to prevent the outbreak of nuclear war."

It was on this basis that the two leaders have discussed what further steps might be possible to reduce the danger of war, and of nuclear war in particular. The result of their discussions is the agreement signed today, an agreement that is a significant step not only in improving US-Soviet relations but in strengthening the stability of international relations.

Outline of the Agreement

Preamble:

This highlights the general context of the agreement: the desire of both sides to create conditions in the world in which the outbreak of nuclear war anywhere would be reduced and ultimately eliminated.

Article I:

sets forth the main purposes of the agreement: (a) that an objective of the policies of the US and of the USSR is to remove the danger of nuclear war and of the use of nuclear weapons; (b) that in accordance with this objective both sides will act in such a manner

- as to avoid the development of situations capable of causing a dangerous exacerbation of their relations,
- as to avoid military confrontations, and
- as to exclude the outbreak of nuclear war between them, and between either of them and other countries.

Thus, each side accepts in this Article both a general aim and a mode of conduct that applies not only to their mutual relations, but to their relations with other countries.

Article II:

defines conditions which must be realized in order to achieve the purposes of the agreement as described in the first Article. These conditions are that each party, the US and the USSR, will refrain from the threat or use

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of force (a) against each other, (b) against the allies of the other party, and (c) against other countries. Moreover, these considerations will be the guide for both the US and the USSR in formulating their foreign policies.

Article III:

Both parties undertake to develop their relations with each other and with other countries in a way consistent with this agreement. The obligations and rights of third countries are not infringed, and the same standards and obligations in US-Soviet relations, as defined in this agreement, also apply to the conduct of the US and the USSR toward other countries.

Article IV:

deals with situations in which both sides would undertake consultation to avert the risk of nuclear war; these situations are defined: (1) if there is a risk of nuclear war between the US and the USSR; (2) if there is a risk of nuclear war between either of them and other countries.

Consultations would not be called for under this Article in the event of a risk of nuclear war between ~~two countries not party to the agreement~~, unless the situation in question created simultaneously a risk of nuclear war involving either the US or the USSR or both.

Article V:

permits each side to inform its allies, other countries, the UN Security Council and the Secretary General of the progress and the outcome of the consultations initiated under Article IV of this agreement.

The US is thus free to consult simultaneously with its allies, or with other countries, while consultations with the USSR are in progress; secret bilateral consultations are thereby not involved.

Article VI:

states that nothing in this agreement affects or impairs: (a) our inherent right of self-defense, as envisaged by Article 51 of the UN Charter, (b) the provision of the Charter relating to the maintenance or restoration of international peace and security, and (c) the obligations by either party towards its allies or other countries in treaties, agreements and other appropriate documents.

The Alliance and other commitments of the US are thus untouched, as is our right of self-defense.

Articles VII, VIII:

state that the agreement is of unlimited duration and enters into force upon signature.

In sum, this agreement:

- is a further step toward reducing the dangers of nuclear war building on the Basic Principles of May, 1972;
- prescribes a manner of conduct for the US and the USSR to achieve the aim of removing the danger of nuclear war;
- applies this standard of behavior to relations with other countries;
- protects the rights of third countries;
- conforms to our commitments and obligations as allies;
- reinforces the UN Charter provisions on the non-use of force or the threat of force.

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